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XII.—*On the Domestication of Certain Animals in England between the Seventh and Eleventh Centuries.* By JOHN THRUPP, Esq.

[Read April 25th, 1865.]

IN considering the history of the domestication of animals in England, we naturally commence by inquiring, what it is that constitutes domestication, and by what tests we distinguish a domesticated species from the wild or semi-domesticated.

It has been said, that the necessities of domestication demand, that an animal be hardy, have an inborn liking for man, be easy to tend, comfort-loving, breed freely in the homestead, and be gregarious. But these are rather the qualities which induce men to domesticate animals, than tests of domestication.*

There are in animals three recognised and distinct degrees of capacity for domestication.

The first class are animals of a “domesticated nature,” being those which when once thoroughly domesticated, continue habitually with man, will not *willingly* leave him, and, if they do so accidentally, will probably return. Among these are cows, horses, sheep, and poultry.

The second are animals capable of only an *imperfect* domestication. They breed freely in the homestead and are useful to man; but if they escape from him will *probably not* return. Among these are tamed deer, hawks, pheasants and partridges bred at home, and gold and silver fish in private waters.

A third class, which are sometimes called domesticated, such as hares, canaries, rabbits, monkeys, parrots, etc., are altogether incapable of domestication; for whatever an eccentric member of the species might do, they will, *as a rule*, escape to savage life on the first opportunity, and never return unless coerced by climate or starvation.†

I have ventured to repeat these very well known distinctions; because, in ignorance of them, our ancestors made a series of experiments in domestication, which were either failures or but partially successful; and also because, in those which succeeded, a species was always semi-domesticated (sometimes for centuries) before it was completely so.

* Ethnological Transactions, New Series, vol. iii, p. 122.

† Justinian, “Inst.”, lib. ii, 1, § 12; Colquhoun, “Roman Civil Law”, vol. ii, p. 37; Blackstone, “Com.”, vol. ii, c. 26.

The customs and regulations contained in ancient laws and charters afford us assistance in fixing the era of the domestication of animals, and of that I propose to avail myself so far as time permits.

1. A man had an absolute right of property in tame animals, a limited one in semi-domesticated, and none in wild.*

2. He was responsible for damages done by the first, partly for the second, but not for the third.

3. There was a fixed price to be paid as compensation for stealing domesticated animals, a similar fixed price for the semi-domesticated, but none for the wild.†

4. Rent payable generally in produce, and also fines to the King, damages and compensations, might be paid in the first, generally in the second, but never in the third class.

5. When a species was wild, the clergy did not tithe it, but so soon as it became domesticated they did so.

6. Wild animals were left to take care of themselves. The semi-domesticated were under the care of the general body of the slaves; but the domesticated had special officers appointed to attend them, such as swine-herds, bee-keepers, ox-herds, etc.

7. When they were completely domesticated, they were let out to tenants as a part of their farm, much as farm buildings are now, and at the end of the tenure reverted to the landlord.

8. They were also specially bequeathed or granted in wills or charters, as were the enclosures, cattle-yards, hog-pens, or castra apium, in which they were kept.

The custom of petting animals has been suggested as the origin of domestication; but I believe that it was adopted mainly from economic motives, and was practised so soon as it was found to pay, and was carried to the extent, and was persevered in so long, as it was found to be profitable, *and neither further nor longer*.

The animals on whose produce our Anglo Saxon forefathers, at first, mainly lived, and which they most earnestly desired to domesticate, were hogs, bees, and eels.‡

The hog was the first with which they were successful. He became the great staple of national food, and one of the most important elements of national wealth. Swine were bequeathed expressly by wills, when other animals were not, were paid as coin to ministers for masses for the dead, and often constituted the marriage portion of the noblest ladies. A nobleman named

* Colquhoun, "Roman Civil Law", sec. 967.

† Idem., secs. 968 and 969. The ancient laws of England and Wales, and of all the continental countries, are crowded with these tariffs.

‡ Turner's "Anglo-Saxon", iii, 22.

Alfred, for instance, gave to each of his daughters as a provision in life, 2,000 pigs, and nothing else.*

Only two animals of consequence, when killed and cooked, have retained their nationality of name, our own hog, which became Anglo-Saxon "ham and bacon," and the goat, which continued after death to be the Welsh "Kid." It was the Norman taste which converted, oxen, sheep, calves, and deer into beef, mutton, veal, and venison.

In the seventh century swine were in a semi-domesticated state. A large proportion of them were bred in the homestead, and then turned out into the vast public forests of beech and oak, to feed on beech-mast and acorns.† As these forests were gradually cleared or became royal property, the custom of turning swine into them was restricted by law.

It *had been* the custom to turn them out for the autumn and winter, as it was expensive to rear them at home, and in the forests they could provide for themselves. But about the ninth century in England, and the tenth in Wales, the royal and private woods were forbidden to them between the feast of St. John and the calends of January; and if swine so turned out trespassed on private grounds the owner had a right to seize and keep one sow out of every herd. The right of hog-feeding—denbera (in Saxon) or pannage (in Norman)—became valuable, and was conveyed specifically in charters, when woods, fisheries, etc. were only mentioned generally.‡

King Alfred fixed an uniform rent for the royal denbera or hogrims. Of swine, who at the end of the season, were three fingers thick in fat, he was to have one third; of those who were two fingers thick in fat, one fourth, and of those a thumb thick, one fifth.§ The right to these pannage-hogs was looked on as a sort of ground rent, and was granted or sold as such.||

The increased value given to swine by being home bred appears by the compensation to be paid for stealing them. A pig reared at home was worth 15 pence; but the same pig, when turned into the woods to feed, might be stolen for sixpence.

Although a large proportion of swine were, at the time of Alfred, home bred, it is probable that a larger number were not so; but roamed the boundary forests of districts or shires. These animals were a constant cause of bloodshed, *and for this reason*, that *being but semi-domesticated* they were not *absolutely* private

* I Will. in app. Sax. Dic.

† Ll. Wallicæ, ii, p. 719.

‡ Codex Diplom. Anglo-Sax., introduction.

§ Ll. Alfredi, s. 49; Thorpe, i, 133.

|| Edward the Confessor's grant of Cealchythe to St. Peter's at Westminster, in which pannage is granted, Diplom. Anglo-Sax., p. xliii.

property, but only so *in a limited sense*; and the epigram that William Rufus bore on his shield, "catch may who catch can" was the custom, and nearly the law, respecting them. In the border counties, lawful forays were incessantly organised for carrying them off, and when captured they were driven to the curtilage of some chieftain whose officers received a fixed legal share of the plunder. His gatekeeper, for instance, was allowed to select *one* out of each drove; but as he too often chose the fattest, it was enacted that he was not to select one that he could not lift with one hand as high as his knee.*

The clearance of the forests and the formation of hunting parks, which took place in the time of Cnut, tended to increase domestication. The swineherd who, before this, was a common slave, became a servile tenant, supplied by his master with a herd of swine as part of his farm, paying a fixed rent in kind, generally ten swine and ten pigs during his life, the herd reverting to his lord on his death.† These "porcarii" (or pig tenants) grew wealthy; and their number and the extent of their possessions mentioned in *Domesday Book*, show that about the end of the tenth century they had succeeded in thoroughly domesticating swine.‡

The domestication of the horse was probably of a later date than that of the pig, and its history exhibits a difference in the habits of the Cymric and Teutonic races.

The Welsh loved, bred, and trained horses, when the Anglo-Saxon cared little for them. In the tenth century, a large proportion of the Welsh horses were kept at home, fed, and trained; but their brood-mares, when in foal, were turned loose in the forest, for the express economic reason, that when they could "not draw a cart up and down hill" they were not worth home keep.§

So soon as conveniently might be after the foal was born, the mare was recaptured; but the foal was left in the forest to take care of himself. If he were not recaptured before he was three years old, he became a wild horse, and only demi-belonged to his owner. Any one might take him, on paying half his value, 60*d.*, though had he been caught and bridled, and three nights corn fed, his legal value was 120*d.* His value was therefore exactly doubled by the very first step towards domestication. When caught, he was trained either as a palfrey or a waggon horse, or kept as a stallion. If the last of these, he was again turned into the forest, and his owner, though responsible for all his other

* Quenteau Code, b. i, c. 21.

† Lappenburg, "Anglo-Saxon Kings", ii, p. 258.

‡ Ellis, "Introduction to Domesday".

§ Ancient Laws and Inst. of Wales, vol. i, p. 265.

horses, was not answerable, during a certain period of the year, for any damage he might do.

Horses turned out in the boundary-forests were as much an object of systematic forays as hogs ; and in a treaty between the Welsh and the western English of the tenth century, it is stipulated that home-bred horses carried off from the woods shall be paid for with 30s., and forest-born with 12s *

The Anglo-Saxons were later than the Welsh in training horses. They had no saddle horses till the middle of the seventh century, when the foreign bishops introduced the use of palfreys. In A.D. 605 the pope sent Æthelbert a present of a saddle and bridle ornamented with gold and gems, and a silver looking glass, a golden scapton, and other things, which the king, apparently not knowing what to do with them, gave to an abbot.

St. Cuthbert rode on horseback, and insisted that the angels did so, referring his incredulous converts to the history of those who came to the assistance of Judas Maccabæus.

But their example was very slowly followed. In the ninth century Alfred the Great tells us, that no man ever rode on horse back for pleasure, though some did so for exercise or expedition ; horse riding, when not absolutely necessary, brought down divine and miraculous punishment ; the kings hunted on foot, and one of the first who ventured to do otherwise would, but for a prayer to his patron saint and his own bad horsemanship, have followed his half-trained steed over the cliffs of Chedder.

In a dialogue of the tenth century, in which the king's huntsman explains every mode of hunting, he never mentions horses.

Persons entitled to fines or rent, payable in produce, refused to accept horses in payment, and the clergy who tithed every thing domesticated, did not tithe them. They were sometimes, but not generally, eaten ; but a considerable export trade was done in them.

On the ethnological conquest of England by the Normans (if I may be pardoned the phrase), which I date from the time of Emma, daughter of Richard, Duke of Normandy, the wife, first of Cnut the great, and afterwards of Athelstan, horses rose in value. The tribute of the Welsh, which had been paid in valueless wolves, was demanded in horses, hawks, and greyhounds ; the exportation of them was forbidden by law ; they were eagerly accepted in payment of compensations ; the clergy induced Edward the Confessor to tithe them ; hunting on horseback became suddenly the fashion ; and every man of rank adopted the custom, which the early Anglo-Saxon abhorred, of fighting on horseback.

* Ancient Laws and Inst. of England, vol. i, p. 357.

Bees.—At the earliest period the Anglo-Saxon was probably more anxious to domesticate bees than horses. Their produce was an article of food, necessary to brewing mead, and extensively used in medicine.

In the sixth and seventh centuries, bees were altogether wild. They swarmed in the woods and formed their honeycombs in hollow trees, and were, at first, classed by law with foxes and otters, as incapable of private ownership, *because they were always on the move*.^{*} Any one who found them had a right to the honey and wax; though from several ecclesiastical regulations in the seventh and eighth century, we may infer that their capture was a dangerous amusement, and that their half naked captors were often stung to death.[†] A favourite mode of taking them was to cut down the tree in which they were, saw off the part containing them, and carry it home.[‡] But as the country progressed in wealth, bee-keeping became more profitable.

The clergy earnestly encouraged it, teaching that bees "*had been sent from heaven, because the mass of God could not be celebrated without wax.*"[§]

The first step towards their domestication was the formation of imitations in bark (*rusca*) of the hollows of the trees in which they were found.||

After a short time a wild swarm became the quasi-property of the owner of the trees in which they had settled for three consecutive nights; but if he omitted to discover it within that time, the finder had a right to 4*d.* and if it were not paid, to keep it himself. This shews the difference in value between the wild and domesticated swarms, as a *rusca* of bees was worth six times 4*d.*, viz., 24*d.*

About the middle of the tenth century, slaves (whose duty it was exclusively to attend to bees) and were called *beo-churls*, were ordinarily attached to wealthy establishments, and from the position of slaves they soon became servile tenants, whom their lord provided with a stock of bees, for which they paid a fixed amount of produce for life, the swarms continuing the property of the lord.

We also find, about this time, the word Anglo-Saxon, *beo-cist* (bee chest) and the Latin, *alvearia* (bee-hives) usually substituted for "*rusca*," from which it may be inferred that these rough constructions were superseded by regular hives.¶ Not long after-

* Venedot. Code, lib. iii, c. 15, 16.

† Theod. Arch. Cant., Pœnitent., xxxi, s. 18.

‡ Ancient Laws and Inst. of Wales, vol. i, p. 503.

§ Ancient Laws and Inst. of Wales, vol. i, pp. 501 and 739.

|| Du Cange, Voce "*Rusca*".

¶ Ll. Edwardi Confess., s. viii.

wards, the clergy induced Edward the Confessor to tithe bee-hives, an evidence that they had become numerous and valuable; which is confirmed by *Domesday Book*, where they are repeatedly mentioned.

But bees were never more than semi-domesticated, nor ever altogether private property; as, if they flew away, and the owner did not recapture them within a very short time, they belonged to any one who could.

Hawk. From the bee which has continued semi-domesticated, I pass to the hawk, whose domestication was superior in degree, though inferior in proportionate number; it was probably a foreign taste, and has altogether ceased.

There is no evidence that the earlier Anglo-Saxons trained these birds. The first we hear of them is in the eighth century, when two falcons were sent by Boniface, Bishop of Mons, to Ethelbert, king of Mercia, which induced a Kentish king to apply to the same prelate for a similar present, and in so doing he stated that he could not obtain hawks of the quality he required in his own kingdom.*

From about this time the kings and nobles laboured to domesticate hawks, though at first in very limited numbers, and with no great skill. They nevertheless formed a regular part of their establishment.

In several charters of the first half of the ninth century, we find monasteries released from the compulsory entertainment of the attendants on the king's horses, hawks, and hounds; but these attendants are not called falconers, nor is that name mentioned (so far as my knowledge extends) in any Anglo-Saxon law, prior to the eleventh century.† From this I infer that the hawks were left to the charge of the slaves generally, and had no special servant appointed to take care of them.

Hawks were, I think, first bred and trained with a view to profit, rather than sport. The Anglo-Saxons caught them early in the autumn, trained them, used them through the winter, and then let them fly away. "If a man has a hawk in the winter," they said, "it would feed itself and its owner, but in the summer, it eats off its own head and its master's."‡

In the tenth century, the custom of more completely training them was introduced, and many persons kept them through the summer that they might be ready for the winter; but this was considered the un-economical innovation of persons who knew

* Bonifacii Opera, vol. i, p. 115.

† Codex Diplom. Anglo-Sax., No. 216, A.D. 822; No. 257, A.D. 844; No. 258, 845. Johnson's Canons, vol. i, p. 126. Marculfi Formulæ, 7 and 8.

‡ Archb. Alfric's Colloquy (by T. Wright), p. 5.

nothing of woodcraft, and was sneered at by the old fowlers. The ecclesiastical laws, both of the seventh and eighth centuries, which forbade the clergy to indulge in "hounds or dice," were, in the tenth century, extended to "hounds, *hawks*, and dice."

Hawks, also, at this time, were first accepted in payment of tribute, and were first (so far as we know) specifically bequeathed by will as valuable property. For these reasons I think that we may ascribe the general domestication of hawks in England to the end of the tenth century; and, if we may judge by the number and value of eiries mentioned in Domesday Book, great labour was bestowed on, and value attached to them. But it was only the smaller breed of hawks, used for capturing teal, moorhen, and small water-fowl, that were generally bred in England; the superior falcon, for attacking cranes and herons, was commonly obtained from Wales or Norway. One of them is valued in Domesday Book at the enormous sum of £10.

The Welsh may not have domesticated hawks so soon as the Saxons, but they excelled in breeding them. In the time of Howell the Good they were considered wild birds, and had no legal value. Anyone who stole a tamed one had merely to return it, and escaped the usual theft fine to the king, and theft damages to the owner.

At a period not long subsequent, the falconer was not only a special officer in every chieftain's household, but held the fourth rank among official nobles. He had a right to three gifts (I suppose, of food) a day from his chief, who was to hold his horse while he took herons or curlews; he was to be found in clothing, liquor, wax candles, and gloves; but he was never to leave his birds. Every other official noble might get as tipsy as he pleased, but the falconer was to drink three times a day only; nor was he, like the other nobles, to sleep in the chief's hall, or the bowers adjoining, *because the smoke was bad for his hawks*, but he was to sleep with his birds in the barn. From the time he put his hawks into mew, to the time he took them out, he was not to be sued or prosecuted.

At the end of the tenth century, trained hawks were received in Wales in payment of rent and tribute, and at a high value. The profit arising from their domestication is shown by the fact that their legal value was doubled by their being mewed.

With the introduction of firearms, the breeding of hawks ceased, for they were no longer the most profitable or exciting means of taking wild fowl.

Of all the animals which the Anglo-Saxons vainly attempted to domesticate, the eel probably cost them most labour and money. Enormous vivariums were attached to nearly every monastery, and supplied the monks with many thousands of eels to alleviate

the severity of their fasts. They bred freely in their prisons, and were very useful to man ; but the eel was a slippery character and stole away whenever he could. The domestication of him was abandoned, and the more economical course pursued of leasing meres and marshes to fishermen, who caught, not bred, them and paid an almost incredible number, as rent.

The list of the animals which the Anglo-Saxons kept as pets, and probably attempted to domesticate, is a very long one; we have wolves, foxes, otters, bears, roebucks, hares, weasels, cats, ravens, rooks, dogs, cranes, peacocks, etc.

Of these pets the first, regarded as utterly irreclaimable, were "wolves, foxes, and otters." Their owners were not responsible for the damage they did; and for the bad reason that "they never did anything but mischief." Their characters went rapidly from bad to worse. Laws and exhortations for their total extirpation followed one another in quick succession. Beavers, martins, and ermines, were laboured at a little longer, because "they made borders for the king's garment;" but they also were soon given up in despair at an early period.*

Time does not permit me to add more than that the laws and charters contain an immense amount of interesting information as to oxen, sheep, dogs, cats, goats, poultry, and other animals: and I think point to the conclusion that, in the tenth century, the more important animals made progress towards, or arrived at, perfect domestication, while futile attempts were generally abandoned.

* Anglo-Saxon Home, p. 380 ; Intellectual Observer, No. xxxv, p. 318, et seq.